



# Annual Report 2009/10

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10**

### **CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

2009-10 was one of significant change within ESR, of bedding down new staff and structures in the first of our new 4 year Sport England funding cycle. If we exclude the £300k of capital investment, 2009-10 saw a 38% increase in Sport England funding, used largely to reinforce the regional network in order to boost support to grass-roots development. Though the increase in Sport England funding is very welcome, our reliance on exchequer funding (71% of total turnover) in an economic recession further highlights the need to increase our earned income to reduce that reliance. This has been a recurring theme of discussion in Board and Management meetings over the last year, and will continue.

Exchequer/lottery funding via Sport England and ESR earned income are both ultimately reliant upon levels of participation and membership, both of which have remained steady over the last year. According to Sport England's benchmark, the Active People Survey, squash/racketball is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest participant sport (behind swimming, cycling, football, athletics, bowls, golf, badminton, tennis and equestrian, and ahead of 21 other funded sports) with 500,000 regular players. If we are to increase participation and membership in an increasingly competitive market for people's leisure time and disposable income, we must constantly challenge what and how we deliver. 2009-10 has seen us start to take some new products (e.g. membership, racketball) into new markets (e.g. leisure centres, universities) via new approaches to marketing, communications and PR.

Visibility remains the key challenge to squash and racketball's growth and development, and our small, young marketing team has focussed on building the profile of ESR's new brand, developing specific, targeted campaigns and PR activity. Only 15% of our current market is female, so an important strand of marketing's campaign work has focussed on attracting a new female market to take up racketball.

Performance has also undergone a significant re-structure of staffing and programme under its new Head of Performance. This is mainly in response to concerns about the lack of depth in quality amongst our best juniors, and the growing gap in performance on the junior world stage, not only compared to the Egyptians. England's senior players on the other hand occupied 4 of the top 10 world rankings in the men and 3 in the women's. And yet, due to a string of unfortunate circumstances, England hasn't generally been able to convert world rankings to international team titles. The men's European Championship was the exception, a title won in magnificent style against France's strongest team competing on home ground.

In summary, 2009-10 has focussed on challenging what and how ESR delivers the targets in its Strategic and Whole Sport Plans, and in bedding down a new structure to deliver new products into new markets in new ways. The expectation over the next year is to be able to report tangible improvements in participation trends, in membership and earned income, in visibility of both sports, in numbers and quality of referees and coaches, in more volunteers on the ground, and in more medals and titles on the international stage. This is the collective challenge to us all, ESR staff & board, to counties and clubs, to national partners and sponsors, to coaches, referees and volunteers. We can only achieve it by working together. Thank you all for your support and contribution to squash and racketball's continued development and success.

Zena Wooldridge OBE  
Chairman, England Squash & Racketball

## **MEMBERSHIP & AFFILIATION**

Membership income in 2009/10 was similar to last year, but whilst we take some encouragement from this in the current economic climate, we are conscious of the need to continue to reach out to the wider squash-playing community. In this regard, and following agreements reached by the Membership Working Group established in 2008, we made a number of changes. These include: the introduction of an online membership aimed primarily at individual seniors and juniors playing in public facilities; agreements for the affiliation of some 69 new organisations, many of whom are within the hitherto largely untapped market of leisure centres; the launch of a new online database that gives clubs the ability to complete their affiliation renewal online; and the introduction of discounts from a range of companies to enhance individual member benefits.

## **FINANCE**

A return to surplus was welcome this year. Staff numbers have increased from 56 to 70 during the year – focussing largely on expanding the regional network – which allows us to get closer to the game and work with a wider range of partners. Earned income is a challenge but is increasing slowly – we remain focussed on developing as many strands for generating additional revenues through diversified membership products and initiatives, as well as driving forward the business development plan.

## **MARKETING**

The past 12 months has seen the England Squash & Racketball brand develop considerably. Following the production of a full suite of generic marketing material we have now moved to producing specific, campaign led literature. This has included the “Join” and “Play” campaigns to encourage membership and activation and “5 for £5” to promote the racketball participation drives in local leisure facilities and other squash venues. Further campaigns planned for 2010/2011 include University based fresher’s/refreshers activity.

The website has been continuously developed in line with feedback and has increased functionality including; online pay and play memberships, online entry to competitions and a membership CRM system which enables clubs to directly carry out membership activity, and provides a central database for the organisation.

We are now working closely with Dunlop following a major sponsorship deal signed in early 2010. This agreement, which establishes Dunlop as our Official Development Partner, has supplied cash and value in kind to support a wide range of development activities and competitions.

Our PR work has been successful in raising the profile of major competitions and players, including coverage on BBC, Sky Sports News and national newspapers and websites. Further work has begun with the Network to develop a portfolio of regional PR - success has already been achieved with a number of regional appearances on local television, radio and a significant number of local squash and racketball press articles being published. To complement this and drive influence within the public sector, our 3 National Partnership agreements with leisure operators have received headline press within all major industry publications, which at a time of much uncertainty within local authorities has really strengthened our positive position.

New membership benefit ‘rewards’ are being sourced by Marketing through direct contact with organisations and meeting benefits providers. The portfolio of benefits on offer to members is gradually increasing.

## **NETWORK**

Overview - Regional Managers have been building relationships with all squash, racketball and external partners within their respective regions with the overriding aim of increasing participation in both sports. We have introduced over 9,000 new participants to our sports, many of whom have become regular participants. We have also directly introduced squash and racketball to over 30,000 young people within a school environment, and of this figure nearly 3,000 have continued playing within a local club or leisure centre.

We have focused on key priority areas to achieve this growth within our sports. These have been in clubs, schools, universities and public facilities. A brief overview update on all of these key areas is summarised below:

### Universities

Having identified the Higher Education sector as a huge area for potential, the 2009/10 season has been a real success. By capitalising on opportunities offered at the start of the academic year we were able help and support at 21 Fresher's Fairs, with 1,000 students registering their interest in squash and racketball. From there we were able to engage these new participants in taster sessions and beginner squash and racketball programmes.

In order to allocate resource effectively and plan strategically, we have now selected 15 universities as a priority from June 2010 onwards. The selections were made in consultation with Regional Managers, Sport England, British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS). Tailored plans are currently being drawn up which will include increasing participation, promotion and marketing, performance development, coach education and volunteer and referee development.

The 2010/11 season will see the introduction of three graded squash tournaments endorsed by BUCS and four workshops to engage with and offer support to a wider range of universities outside of the 15 named as a priority. We will also contribute to a new BUCS strategy for squash and work closely with TASS to identify four 'High Performance' Universities.

### Racketball

Racketball has experienced significant success over the last 12 months which has been a result of the direct targeting of delivery programmes to attract more women and girls and 50+ participants into racketball. This has been in both public facilities and expanding delivery programmes in traditional clubs.

This participation growth is to increase further by engaging even more effectively with leisure operators on a national level via campaign led initiatives. In such challenging economic times, stimulating court usage at off peak times shows the massive commercial benefit racketball in particular can provide to these external partners.

### Partnerships with Leisure Operators

A strategic decision was taken to work directly with Leisure Operators to influence participation rates within the public sector recognising that an impact must be made in this sector to fully maximise potential opportunities. Over the last 12 months we have secured 3 National Partnership agreements with the following operators: DC Leisure (18 sites), Greenwich Leisure Limited (16 sites) and Fusion Lifestyle (6 sites). These headline agreements and joint approach gives far greater strength to influencing local delivery. We have also established localised agreements with smaller numbers of centres within every region. 69 new centres have affiliated as a result of this targeted work and coaching programmes established at all centres delivered by our development coaches and managed by regional managers. This has set the foundations for the next 12 months in this area, as a

push is now taking place to convert new participants into England Squash & Racketball members. We also intend to create new club structures in leisure centres to strengthen localised competitive structures and bolster county based competition.

### Capital Investment

As part of our Whole Sport Plan Award from Sport England we were allocated £2.1m to invest in capital projects between 2009 and 2013. Following a rigorous application and selection process Year 1 of the programme saw 15 applicants benefit from £300,000 investment towards total project costs of just over £1m. Each project is linked to significant activity, as a condition of grant, which goes towards our overall objectives of increasing participation in squash and racketball. The recipients comprise 12 clubs and 3 public leisure facilities.

We have also begun work on a new Facilities Strategy, to replace the previous strategy published in 2000. The aim of the strategy is to provide both an overview of the needs of our sports and to gain evidence base to strategically create better environments and facilities for the development and growth of Squash and Racketball in England. The strategy will provide ESR and other key stakeholders a strategic approach to support and enhance the squash/racketball facility portfolio through either capital or revenue investment, identify where and who to develop partnerships with. It will identify key challenges to our sport and how we propose to safeguard, promote and advocate squash and racketball facilities.

A Facilities Strategy Steering Group has been created to guide and inform the development of the strategy and a consultation exercise established including county associations, local government, facility contractors and commercial operators. The Strategy is aimed for completion in autumn 2010.

### **COMPETITION & EVENTS**

More tournaments than ever filled the 2009 / 2010 tournament calendar. The junior scene continued to grow with 62 sanctioned events as well as the introduction of an English Closed Championship.

The British Open Championships - September traditionally heralds the start of the season, and it began in style with the British Open at the NSC in Manchester (8-14 September). The Men's quarter finals boasted 4 English players, James Willstrop (Yorks), Nick Matthew (Yorks), Peter Barker (Essex) and Daryl Selby (Essex). Old adversaries and fellow Yorkshire men Nick Matthew and James Willstrop reached the final and Matthews prevailed in the fifth game of a hotly contested match lasting nearly an hour and a half: 8-11 11-8 7-11 11-3 12-10.

English hopes in the Women's competition ended with defeat in the semis for both Alison Walters (Middx) and Jenny Duncalf (Yorks). The final saw 2<sup>nd</sup> seed Rachel Grinham (Aus) beat 5<sup>th</sup> seed Madeline Perry (Ire) 11-6 11-5 12-10.

The Masters categories of the Championships were once again well supported, with English players taking all but two of the titles. Masters finals were: MO35 - Simon Parke (Yorks) bt Hadrian Stiff (Devon) 11-5 11-7 11-5, MO40 - Kevin White (Derbys) bt Yawar Abbas (D & C) 11-7 7-11 11-5 11-9, MO45 - Simon Taylor (Leics) bt Eamonn Price (Herts) 9-0 9-1 9-0, MO50 - Ross Norman (NZ) bt Richard Millman (Norfolk) 6-9 9-7 9-7 9-4, MO55 - Mark Cowley (Middx) bt Peter Alexander (Berks) 10-8 9-1 9-3, MO60 - Philip Ayton (Sussex) bt Howard Cherlin (Middx) 9-7 6-9 9-4 0-5 Ret, MO65 - Adrian Wright (Yorks) bt Kenneth Johnson (Num) 10-9 10-8 9-3, MO70 - Pat Kirton (Surrey) bt Michael Gough (USA) 9-3 9-7 9-3, WO35 - Jeannine Cowie (Lancs) bt Christine Smylie (Mersey) 8-10 9-6 9-2 9-6, WO40 - Nikki Fowler (Chs) bt Isabelle Tweedle (Surrey) 9-1 9-5 9-2, WO45 - Sil Schrijvers (Bel) bt Bea De Dreu-Spitse (Ned) 9-1 9-1 9-7, WO50 - Julie Field (Yorks) bt Lesley Sturgess (Derbys) 9-1 2-9 9-1 9-7 9-3, WO60 - Bett Dryhurst (Worcs) bt Maureen Carroll (Scot) 9-5 9-2 9-2.

The Tecnifibre British Junior Championships - For the first time the British Junior Closed (29 Oct - 1 Nov), sponsored by Tecnifibre combined all 4 age categories, staged in Manchester at the NSC and the Northern Lawn Tennis and Squash Club.

Top seed in the U19 Boys, Ben Coleman (Essex) took on 5/8 seed Robert Downer (Sussex), who had previously knocked out the 2<sup>nd</sup> seed - Coleman won 11-7 11-6 11-7. Oliver Holland (Notts), a former U13 champion and runner up in the U15 event last season took the BU17 crown in an enthralling 5 game final against Declan James (Notts) 6-11 11-7 11-6 7-11 11-9. The BU15 final between Richie Fallows (Essex) and Ashley Davies (Derbys) was won 11-5 12-10 11-9 by Fallows. Yorkshire's James Peach seeded 1 saw off a spirited challenge from 2<sup>nd</sup> seed Emyr Evans (Wales) 6-11 11-6 11-6 11-8 to capture the U13 crown.

3/4 seed Carrie Ramsey (Yorks) beat top seed Kimberley Hay (Num) to reach the GU19 final, but couldn't find the same form and lost 11-4 11-4 11-9 to 2<sup>nd</sup> seed Millie Tomlinson (Derbys). Emily Whitlock (Chs) made up for losing the U17 final last season as she coasted through to the final again. She did not drop a game throughout and became champion as she defeated Brogan Lane (Herts) 11-9 11-6 11-7. Eleanor Lake (Glos) battled her way to the U15 final where she beat Lucy Pallet (Warks) 11-6 11-5 11-8 to add to last season's U13 title. Another Eleanor (Epke) from Gloucestershire justified her top seeding in the U13 competition as she beat Georgina Kennedy (Kent) 11-5 11-6 14-12.

The National Cup – The National Cup features the winners of each county league in area qualifying rounds which lead through to national finals. The Finals were held at Nottingham SRC (28-29 November) with Edgbaston (Warwickshire) taking the Women's title and Hazelwood (Hertfordshire) claiming the men's.

The Tecnifibre British Junior Open - The New Year celebrations were barely concluded when the Tecnifibre British Junior Open (2-6 Jan) took centre stage in Sheffield. Heavy snow caused some disruption, but players from 37 countries took part in the event, where the new initiative of full Monrad draws being played out if full in all age category proved to be a huge success.

The Egyptians dominated the event, but there were also some good and encouraging finishing positions for English players. BU13 Final: Youssef Mohammed (Egy) bt Roshan Kumarakannan (India) 11-2 11-3 11-5. Harry Falconer (Leics) finished 8<sup>th</sup>, Patrick Rooney (Mersey) 9<sup>th</sup>. BU15 Final: Shebab Essam (Egy) bt Dylan Murray (USA) 11-5 3-11 11-4 20-18. Richie Fallows (Essex) and David Fumpson (Mersey) finished 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> respectively. BU17 Final: Marwan El Shorbaggy (Egy) bt Mohamed Abou El Ghar (Egy) 11-9 12-10 5-11 11-4. Declan James (Notts) came 5<sup>th</sup> with Oliver Holland (Notts) 6<sup>th</sup>. BU19 Final: Mohamed El Shorbaggy (Egy) bt Karim Abdel (Egy) 11-9 11-7 11-7 12-10 11-9. Charles Sharpes (Surrey) was 7<sup>th</sup> and Nathan Lake (Glos) 10<sup>th</sup>.

GU13 Final: Mayer Hamy (Egy) bt Nouran Gohar (Egy) 5-11 11-5 11-3 9-11 11-8. Georgina Kennedy (Kent) finished 8<sup>th</sup> and Hannah Daly (Herts) 12<sup>th</sup>. GU15 Final: Yathreb Adel (Egy) bt Miriam Metwaly (Egy) 13-11 12-10 11-5. Eleanor Lake (Glos) was 8<sup>th</sup> and Lucy Beecroft (Num) 12<sup>th</sup>. GU17 Final: Nour El Tayeb (Egy) bt Amanda Sobhy (USA) 11-6 11-4 11-4. Emily Whitlock (Chs) came 4<sup>th</sup> while Katie Smith (Yorks) was 12<sup>th</sup>. GU19 Final: Nour El Sherbeny bt Salma Hany (Egy) 11-8 11-7 11-3. Millie Tomlinson (Derbys) finished 6<sup>th</sup> and Kimberley Hay (Num) 12<sup>th</sup>.

The National Championships – The Nationals were staged at the NSC in their usual slot in the calendar: 7-14 February. There was little Valentine's Day love shown between Nick Matthew (Yorks) and James Willstrop (Yorks) as they locked horns again in the National Championship Final. Matthew scooped up another title winning 11-5 11-6 11-6.

Yet again Jenny Duncalf (Yorks) and Alison Walters (Middx) battled it out in the Women's final with Walters edging a marvellous match 12-10 in the 5<sup>th</sup> 10-12 11-7 4-11 11-7 12-10, to wrestle back the title from Duncalf.

Nick Taylor, formally from Manchester now based in Jersey, was a popular winner of the O35 title beating Clive Ewins (Dorset) 11-5 11-2 11-6. Rick Weatherall (Berks) took full advantage of the retirement in the semi final of British Open Champion and current holder Yawar Abbas (D & C) to reach the O40 final where he beat the tenacious Kevin White (Derbys) 12-10 11-7 3-11 11-7. Norfolk's Richard Millman became O50 champion with an emphatic 9-5 9-0 9-3 win over Jeremy Goulding (Avon). In the O55 final, British Open finalists Mark Cowley (Middx) and Peter Alexander (Berks) served up a treat. Cowley came back from 2-0 down to win 10-9 in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 3-9 2-9 9-6 9-4 10-9. After putting out favourite Philip Ayton (Sussex), Hampshire's Barry Featherstone took the O60 crown in an epic 72 minute match versus Bob Robinson (Yorks) 9-5 6-7 8-10 10-8 9-6. Adrian Wright (Yorks) added the O65 title to that of the British Open as he beat William Wilson (Chs) 9-6 9-4 9-6. Pat Kirton (Surrey) also doubled up the British Open and National Championship O70 titles with a 9-3 9-2 9-2 win over John Woodliffe (Glos).

Jeannine Cowie, Nikki Fowler and Julie Field were also double champions adding Nationals success to their victories in the British Open. Jeannine Cowie (Lancs) bt Gayle Kerrison (Staffs) 9-6 10-8 9-7 in the Women's Over 35's while Nikki Fowler (Chs) bt Isabelle Tweedle (Surrey) 9-6 10-8 9-7 and Julie Field (Yorks) bt Jackie Gardner (D & C) 1-9 9-5 9-0 9-3 in the Over 40 and 50's respectively. Heather Tweedle (Mersey) beat O45 holder Mandy Akin (Kent) 2-9 7-9 9-3 10-9 9-4 in a great battle, and Averil Murphy (Essex) took the O55 crown in a Round Robin event.

The English Junior Closed - The inaugural English Junior Closed was held at Nottingham Squash Club (5-7 March) and attracted 250 of the finest junior players in England.

Patrick Rooney (Mersey), took his first National title beating top seed and British Champion James Peach (Yorks) 13-11 9-11 11-1 16-14 in the BU13's. Top ranked U15 player and British Champion Richie Fallows (Essex) added the English title, but was pushed all the way by Hamish Falconer (Lincs) 11-5 12-14 11-7 9-11 11-6. Another real battle, this time for the U17 title between Matthew Sidaway (Lancs) and Tom Ford (Glos) with Sidaway pinching it 12-10 in the 5<sup>th</sup> after 97 minutes of squash, 11-3 11-5 9-11 14-16 12-10. Charles Sharpes (Surrey) showed excellent form, not dropping a game in the U19 Championship, and kept his "clean sheet" beating James Earles (Yorks) in the final 11-5 12-10 11-8.

Georgina Kennedy (Kent) took the spoils in the U13 final with an 11-6 11-3 11-6 win over county colleague Amelia Henley. Eleanor Lake (Glos) became U15 champion when she narrowly beat Lucy Beecroft (Num) 11-5 12-14 11-7 9-11 11-6 to add to her British Closed title. Emily Whitlock (Chs) continued to dominate in the U17's with an emphatic victory over Issey Norman Ross (Hants) 11-2 11-5 11-5. Millie Tomlinson (Derby) is equally dominant in the U19 age category, however Carrie Ramsey (Yorks) looked to be playing well in the final until injury forced her to concede the match to Tomlinson 13-11 11-2 2-0 Ret.

The National Schools Championships - The National Schools Finals at the NSC (15-18 March) got off to a great start with two days of Trophy Finals which involve many schools that are not traditional squash playing centres. Trophy Winners were Boys Under 15: Cheltenham College, Girls Under 19: Downe House School, Boys Under 19: Tewkesbury School.

The main finals were watched by an interested spectator, the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown who was visiting the Sport City facilities. Millfield Boys lost a tight match 3-2 to Wycliffe in the under 15 final, but their girls team made some amends, beating Downe House by the same score line. In the U19 categories, Millfield took both titles, defeating Central

Newcastle in the girl's event and Wycliffe in the boys. The win by the boys clinched a record breaking 8<sup>th</sup> successive title.

The Regional Junior Team Championships - The Regional Junior Team Championships (17-18 April) took place at three midland venues, Birmingham University, Solihull Arden and Coventry and North Warwickshire. The event was the conclusion to this seasons ESR regional programme and saw almost 300 of the country's top junior players fight it out in Boys and Girls Under 13, 15 and 17 categories as well as Mixed Under 11's. Regional Champions: Mixed Under 11 - North East, Girls U13 - London, Boys U13 - North East, Girls U15 - North East, Boys U15 - East Midlands, Girls U17 - North East, Boys U17 - East Midlands.

The British U23 Squash Championships - The British U23 Squash Championships (22-25 April) returned to Hunts County Squash Club. Historically this has been a "signpost" event with past winners going on to achieve top international careers.

Joel Hinds (Derbys) went one better than his runners up position last season, when he beat Joe Lee (Surrey) 7-11 11-4 11-9 11-9. Also going one better was Deon Saffery (Wales) who beat Emma Chorley (Somerset) in a close final 11-8 11-9 3-11 9-11 11-6.

Inter County Championships - May Bank Holiday Weekend is now established as the date for the Men's and Women's Inter County Finals, this season supported by the Hobin Group. A packed Fairways Lodge in Manchester played host to the 8 men's and 8 women's teams vying for first place, as well as trying to avoid relegation. Reigning men's champions Hertfordshire relinquished their crown 4-1 to a Surrey team captained by the experienced Neil Frankland, while Yorkshire women retained their title beating Premier Division newcomers Warwickshire, also 4-1.

Finals and Champions:

South Marston Club, Wiltshire - 23-24 Jan: Men's Over 50 – Kent, Men's Over 60 – Sussex.  
Bexley LT&SC, Kent - 20-21 Feb: Women's Over 50 – South East Wales, Racketball – Dorset.  
Nottingham Squash Club - 27-28 Feb: Men's Over 45 – Surrey, Men's Over 55 – Surrey,  
Women's Over 40 – Surrey.

Surrey Sports Park, Guildford - 20-21 March: Boys Under 19 – Gloucestershire, Girls Under 19 – South East Wales, Boys Under 15 – Kent, Girls Under 15 – Warwickshire.

Lilleshall National Sports Centre, Shropshire - 27-28 March: Boys Under 17 – Gloucestershire, Girls Under 17 – Yorkshire, Boys Under 13 – Gloucestershire, Girls Under 13 – North Wales.

Wolverhampton LTSC - 10-11 April: Men's Over 35 – Middlesex, Women's League – Yorkshire.

Fairways Lodge, Manchester – 1-2 May: Men – Surrey, Women – Yorkshire.

The Premier Squash League – the PSL continued to attract top world players and packed galleries throughout the season. Newport flew the flag for Wales as 12 teams in 2 divisions battled it out to see who would make the final. Esporta Oxford and MB Nottingham went through to the semis from Group A, together with TWP St Georges Hill and Surrey Health and Fitness from Group B. Esporta Oxford booked their place in the finals with a comfortable 4-1 win over TWP St Georges Hill and were joined by fellow Esporta club Surrey Health and Racquets who squeezed past MB Nottingham 3-2.

The finals were staged on 4 May at the impressive new squash facilities at Surrey Sports Park in Guildford, Surrey. A classic final saw the 2008 Champions Surrey Health and Racquets take the coveted crown from Esporta Oxford, in front of an ecstatic band of supporters.

Dunlop National Racketball Championships - As the season started to draw to a close, Racketball took centre stage with the Dunlop National Racketball Championships which was held at Edgbaston Priory and University of Birmingham (7-9 May). The events team took the

lead in the Championships for the first time, acknowledging the continued growth in both the sport and the championships.

Daryl Selby (Essex) and Laura Hill (Derbyshire) retained their Dunlop National Racketball titles with hard fought victories over squash legend Peter Nicol (Yorkshire) and Daryl's sister Lauren Selby (Essex) respectively. Finals: Men - Daryl Selby (Essex) bt Peter Nicol (Yorks) 11-4 10-12 11-6 11-9, Women - Laura Hill (Derbys) bt Lauren Selby (Essex) 11-3 11-7 11-5, Men's O35 - Jim Lord (Yorks) bt Matt Baker (Devon) 2-11 11-1 11-5 4-11 11-1, Men's O40 - Jim Lord (Yorks) bt Rob Watkins (Avon) 7-11 11-2 11-9 11-2, Men's O45 - Steve Bateman (Bucks) bt Stephen Wall (Sussex) 11-9 11-8 4-11 11-3, Men's O50 - Mike Philips (Sussex) bt Keith Palmer (Kent) 6-11 12-10 11-4 5-11 11-9, Men's O55 - Richard Waller (Warks) bt William Mullholland (Warks) 11-3 12-10 11-9, Men O60 - Ian Graham (Sussex) bt John Cockhill (Yorks) 11-8 12-10 Ret, Men's O65 - John Houghton (Warks) bt Chris Issacs (Warks) 7-11 11-8 7-11 11-7 12-10, Men's O70 - Tony Thomas (Warks) bt Roger Pinny (Dorset) 11-8 6-11 11-8 7-11 11-9, Women's O35 - Kathryn Milne (Surrey) won a round robin, Women's O40 - Bev Vatcher (Dorset) bt Sue Smith (Derby) 11-5 11-1 12-10, Women's O45 - Lesley Sturgess (Derby) bt Carol Lindsay (Warks) 8-11 11-9 11-5 11-2, Women's O50 - Lesley Sturgess (Derby) bt Jenny Matthews (Surrey) 11-3 11-3 8-11 11-5, Women's O55 - Linda Smith (Devon) bt Gill Wagner (Yorks) 11-3 11-2 11-3, Women's O60 - Bett Dryhurst (Surrey) won a round robin.

The National Club Championships - The curtain finally fell on the season with the National Club Finals held at Nottingham Squash Club (15-16 May). Now in its 27<sup>th</sup> year, club sides from up and down the country played in 8 categories throughout the season to reach the finals. The winners of the Men's and Women's finals would go through to represent England at the European Team Championships, which are to be held on home soil at Pontefract in September 2010.

Finals: Men: Holders Colets took their 12<sup>th</sup> title as they beat Pontefract 4-1, Women: Pontefract beat Edgbaston Priory 4-1 enabling them to have a crack at the European title at their own club, Men's O35: Colets, winners of the last 8 finals maintained their stranglehold to beat Dunnington 5-0, Men's O45: Racquets Thame beat Boston 3-0, Men's O55: Nottingham, with home advantage beat Bourne 2-1, Racketball: Edgbaston Priory beat Devon & Exeter 4-1, Non County Mixed: An all Duffield final, saw the first team beat the second 3-1, Junior Mixed: Pontefract pipped Edgbaston Priory 3-2.

## **REFEREES**

The positive atmosphere among the refereeing community has continued to develop over the last season. The year has seen the introduction of a new referee education program. This includes a new training syllabus, a new Provisional Grade Referee examination process, an easier progression route and organised mentoring support for Provisional Grade Referees looking to progress to County Grade. There is now also a specific syllabus for junior referee education in clubs/schools and regional academies.

During the year all instructional staff have been retrained to UKCC standard and a training and re-orientation day was held in September for all ESR Referee Instructors to launch the new education program. A Referee Road show has been developed which aims to provide support to counties and referees who would not normally be involved at major events by means of providing updated information and opportunity to be mentored by World Grade referees.

The Referee Development Officer is also advising both the World and European Squash Federations on refereeing development and training.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

Following the attainment of the Advanced Safeguarding Standard, work has focused on embedding our policies and guidelines into the fabric of our sports. This is a long term project and we are most grateful for the support and commitment shown by many counties and clubs over the last year. There has been concern about the introduction of new Vetting and Barring legislation, which could impose significant additional burdens on those working with children at the grassroots. The new government announced in May the suspension of the scheme pending the outcome of a comprehensive review – which may well result in less onerous requirements on volunteers.

## **PERFORMANCE**

Regional Programme – the Regional Programme has gained further momentum over the past year. The Regional Coaches have impacted positively upon the quality and depth of young players across each region. In addition, the Regional Coaches have been contributing to Coach Education and Coach Development, enhancing the quality of coaching and coaches nationally. Another benefit of the Regional Programme has been the greater co-operation and understanding between Performance and Network, which has resulted in a greater synergy within each region.

England Junior Programme – under the guidance of Fiona Geaves, who joined us in September, the Junior Programme continued to improve. Our junior players successfully retained the European u15 and u17 Team Championships, whilst we also won the ‘5 Nations’ (France, Wales, Scotland, Ireland) event at u13 and u15 level. Whilst Egypt continue to dominate at junior level, England do have some outstanding prospects in Emily Whitlock, Oliver Holland and Declan James who all enjoyed considerable success at u17 level.

At u19 level, we regained the European Team Championship and retained the Junior Women’s Individual Championship too – Carrie Ramsey defeating Millie Tomlinson in the final. With the exception of Emily Whitlock, Carrie Ramsey and Millie Tomlinson, there is still considerable progress to be made with our u17 and u19 girls. The u19 Junior Women’s Team struggled at the World Team Championships in India, finishing a disappointing 6<sup>th</sup> place. There is much work to be done if we are to compete with the best countries in the world at the next championship in 2011.

Transitional Programme – this was a new aspect to the programme, introduced to aid the development of players aged 19-25 years. Under the guidance of David Champion, the programme has gained significant momentum over the past year and players including Adrian Waller, Joe Lee, Joel Hinds, Laurence Delasaux and Ben Coleman have enjoyed considerable rises in the world rankings. Similar to the u17/19s, there is concern over the quality and depth of young women coming through – with the exception of Emily Whitlock, Carrie Ramsey and Millie Tomlinson. The Performance Team is very aware of the need for extra efforts in this area.

Senior Programme – there have been mixed fortunes over the past year. Nick Matthew came very close to becoming world number one at Christmas, missing out to Ramy Ashour by the narrowest of margins. Nick had to settle for a career high world no2 and likewise so did Jenny Duncalf, who achieved her career high ranking at the turn of the year. Nick and Jenny had considerable success on the professional tour with a number of tournament victories.

Disappointingly, the men lost the World Team championship, finishing 4<sup>th</sup> in an event that was dominated by Egypt. Whilst the men retained their European Team Championship, the women lost to Holland in the semi-final – the first time we have ever lost the event in its history. Although the team had been severely weakened through injury (Alison Waters, world

5 and Laura Massaro, world 9 were both injured), the side was still seeded to retain the trophy.

## **COACH EDUCATION**

A main aim of the 2009/10 Coach Education Programme was to deliver a more cost effective programme by maximising candidate numbers on courses. 22 level 1 qualifications were delivered with a total of 258 candidates and 6 level 2 courses with 73 candidates, which is an average of 12 candidates per qualification. A level 3 with 15 candidates and a combined Level 1 & 2 qualification for BSPA members with 9 candidates was also delivered.

Kingston Maurward College, an approved centre has delivered 5 Level 1 Squash qualifications with a total of 43 candidates and a level 2 with 9 candidates. A majority of these courses were delivered to the Army School of Physical Training.

Seven Racketball courses have been delivered qualifying 83 coaches, 4 Teachers Awards totalling 41 teachers and 2 Leaders Awards with 20 candidates.

The cost of coaching qualifications remains high, but this has been partially offset by bursaries and other financial interventions which have reduced the direct cost to candidates. We received over £27,000 in funding through sportscoach uk's Coaching Investment Programme, which provided significant rebates to 44 Level 2 and 3 candidates. The funding also paid for the training of coach educators and internal verifiers. Most of the Development and Regional Coaches are undergoing training to become UKCC tutors and assessors, which will help reduce the costs involved in delivering the Coach Education Programme in the future.

We now have 588 licensed coaches, an increase of 107 coaches from last year's figure. In order to help encourage coaches to make a part or full time career out of coaching we piloted a 'Business Essentials Course for Coaches' in association with GB Sport. GB Sport is now delivering a number of generic courses across the country, which licensed coaches are encouraged to attend.

A lot of time and resources have gone into the development of the UKCC Level 4 qualification. ESR, Squash Wales and Scottish Squash have been working in collaboration with Basketball, Hockey, Rugby League, Table Tennis and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) to develop the programme. Squash, Table Tennis and Rugby League are the first sports to gain full UKCC endorsement.

The qualification takes 2 years to complete and includes both generic modules followed by sport specific interventions. Successful candidates gain a UKCC Level 4 qualification and a Postgraduate Diploma in 'Elite Coaching Practice' from UCLAN. A new Coaching Needs Strategy, currently in development, will confirm the role to be played by the new Level 4 qualification.

## **TECHNICAL AND MEDICAL SERVICES**

We continue to respond to regular requests for information and support on every aspect of squash courts - the Technical Information Sheets available on the website are a valuable and often visited reference resource, available to all. We still aim to place the full Maintenance Manual on the website with access to affiliated clubs/centres and approved contractors/suppliers in due course. The Technical Committee continue to monitor quality of workmanship, systems and products provided by the contractors on the approved lists. We are committed to working closer with approved Contractors and Suppliers to improve the service to facility providers and ultimately improve the quality of courts and enhance user experiences.

We have begun working with a number of European suppliers interested in introducing prefabricated squash courts to the English market - the main potential benefit of which could

be a significant reduction on new build capital costs. We are also working with the British Standards Institution to develop new and improved specifications for Racketball balls; currently only the Dunlop black ball and the Price blue and black balls are ESR approved.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

As always, we have a great many organisations and people to thank for their part in our work. Sport England's vital support remains central to our overall mission. We have set ourselves some stiff targets over the four years of our current plan and the partnership with Sport England is key to success. We must ensure that our messages reach every part of their organisation so that together we advocate successfully – we are absolutely convinced of the case for squash and racketball – and will do everything we can to make sure that message is shared. Our commercial partnerships are developing – the Development Partnership with Dunlop has huge potential.

Manchester City Council continue to provide great support – we are delighted to be a key sport for the city and will continue to work in harness with them to mutual benefit. The National Squash Centre is a really important resource and the work of the Manchester Sport and Leisure Trust, who own and manage the building, is greatly appreciated, as is the terrific support given to the Performance programme from the English Institute of Sport.

The work of county associations is hugely important, and we are grateful to the thousands of volunteers at county and club level, without whose passion, commitment and sheer hard work our sports would not be where they are now.